

CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)
STATEMENT TO RULES COMMITTEE ON ENERGY BILL II
October 6, 2005

Thank you for allowing me to appear before you today to testify on H.R. 3893.

Like last week, I must open by complaining about the overall process on this bill, which I know is beyond this Committee's control. We are rushing through legislation that makes major changes in energy and environmental laws with little time to understand the legislation. There is no reason for this, and it is no way to legislate. It simply guarantees divisive battles over bad bills.

In this case, we understand that there will be a manager's amendment offered that is likely to significantly rewrite the bill. Those changes may be for the best, but we should not be presented with fundamental changes in a manager's amendment, making it once again difficult to evaluate the impact of a substantial bill.

But it would take a manager's amendment that changed virtually every line of this bill to make it acceptable to me. The bill imposes burdens on taxpayers and weakens environmental protections, while granting greater profits to oil companies. The bill's effect on consumers is neutral, at best. And the bill is opposed by organizations representing states and local governments because it preempts their authority. It doesn't sound like a very conservative bill to me.

But I won't take your time today to itemize my problems with the underlying bill. I will just point to one glaring flaw. The bill does almost nothing to address our growing demand for oil, which is at the heart of all our energy problems. Our insatiable thirst for oil threatens our security and our economy, and it robs families of needed income.

What does this bill do about it? Pretty much nothing. But we could take steps to curb our demand for oil – and the most obvious and effective step is to raise fuel economy, or CAFE standards. The National Academy of Sciences has found that we can raise CAFE standards without reducing safety. We will be putting money in Americans' pockets.

Now this Committee might say, "Well, we've voted on this measure before, as recently as July." And that's true. But we are not in the same circumstances as in July. We have \$3 a gallon gasoline. We've had the disruptions caused by the hurricanes. More Americans understand the dangers imposed by our gas guzzling vehicles, but the market does not offer them many opportunities to express their preference for more efficient cars and trucks. Indeed a recent study found that 86 percent of Americans support increasing fuel economy standards.

In addition, we're now changing government policy again, and we should be able to decide if CAFE standards should be part of the suite of policies that are before us right now. That's why 17 of my colleagues, including several chairmen, joined me in writing to this Committee, requesting that my fuel economy amendment be made in order.

There are many steps that need to be taken to improve this bill. For example, it could be improved, at least slightly, by limiting its New Source Review provisions to refineries – the ostensible target of the bill. But nothing would improve the bill so much as including language that would actually help reduce gas prices – namely fuel economy standards.

Mr. Chairman, there is no way to have a complete debate on major bill that is being rushed through this way. But if my amendment is made in order, at least we would have a debate on all aspects of the energy issue – on demand as well as supply. We would also have debate on a real step to help consumer rather than just on steps to help oil companies.

I urge that you make my amendment in order. Thank you.